

Message Text

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S E C R E T NOUAKCHOTT 1709

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CF, XJ,XA, MR
SUBJECT: AFRICAN POLICY: SHABA; SOVIET-CUBAN INVOLVEMENT

REF: STATE 153145

1. TASK OF GETTING AFRICANS TO DO ANYTHING CONCRETE ABOUT FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN AFRICA WILL BE DIFFICULT. "MODERATE" MAURITANIAN REGIME, FOR EXAMPLE, BELIEVES THAT, GIVEN DIVISIONS EXISTING ON CONTINENT, OAU WILL BE POWERLESS TO DO MORE THAN MAKE PLATITUDINOUS STATEMENTS ABOUT NON-INTERVENTION. MAURITAINS DEPLORE SOVIET AND CUBAN INROADS ON CONTINENT AND HAVE URGED US REPEATEDLY TO QUOTE DO SOMETHING UNQUOTE ABOUT IT. NEVERTHELESS, IN REAL WORLD OF CURRENT AFRICAN POLITICS, THIS REGIME HAS WELCOMED FRENCH INTERVENTION HERE AND HAS GONE ON RECORD AS FAVORING INTERVENTION GENERALLY IF IT IS TO SUPPORT LEGITIMATELY CONSTITUTED GOVERNMENT AGAINST OUTSIDE ATTACK. ON QUOTE PROGRESSIVE UNQUOTE SIDE OF LEDGER, ALGERIANS HAVE CONDEMNED FRENCH INTERVENTION IN SAHARA AND CHAD BUT HAVE TENDED TO CHARACTERIZE CUBAN ACTIVITIES ON CONTINENT AS LEGITIMATE AID TO SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENTS.

2. IN OTHER WORDS, FOREIGN INTERVENTION, WHETHER
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SOVIET OR WESTERN, HAS BEEN VITAL TO SURVIVAL OF A NUMBER OF AFRICAN REGIMES, THIS ONE AMONG THEM. TO ASK THESE GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE PRACTICAL STEPS TO END SUCH INTERVENTION IN THEIR OWN COUNTRIES WITHOUT ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY THAT THE OTHER SIDE WOULD CEASE ITS ACTIVITIES WOULD BE A TALL ORDER. FOR EACH SIDE, THE LESSON OF SHABA WAS DIFFERENT AND HAD BEEN LEARNED

BEFOR THE KATANGA GENDARMES LAUNCHED THEIR INVASION.

3. THUS, INTERVENTION SEEMS LIKELY TO REMAIN A FACT OF AFRICAN LIFE FOR SOME TIME TO COME. UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCCES, PERHAPS BEST WE CAN HOPE FOR IS TO LIMIT SUCH ACTIVITY AS MUCH AS WE CAN CONSISTENT WITH OUR INTERESTS AND THOSE OF OUR AFRICAN FRIENDS. TO THIS END, WE WOULD DO WELL TO CONSULT AS CLOSELY AND AS FRANKLY AS POSSIBLE, NOT ONLY WITH KEY AFRICAN LEADERS AND WITH OUR WESTERN ALLIES AND FRIENDS, BUT WITH OUR ADVERSARIES AS WELL. CHALLENGING OUR OPPONENTS TO A CONTEST OF MUTUAL LIMITATION OF AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT COULD BE USEFUL; SO COULD A QUIET SEARCH FOR COMMON INTERESTS IN RESOLVING VARIOUS OF THE CONTINENT'S CONFLICTS.

4. WE SHOULD ALSO BE ALERT FOR POSSIBILITIES OF BRINGING AFRICAN ADVERSARIES TO TERMS. WE HAVE BEEN WATCHFUL FOR SUCH CHANCES IN SAHARA, SO FAR WITH LITTLE SUCCESS. THE REDUCTION OF TENSIONS BETWEEN AFRICAN STATES WILL REDUCE THE PRESENT POLARIZATION OF THE CONTINENT AND WITH IT THE INTEREST IN INTERVENTION BY BOTH SEEKERS AND DOERS.

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